

LAURA RICHARDSON

37TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

1725 LONGWORTH BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0537  
(202) 225-7924 – PHONE  
(202) 225-7926 – FAX

100 WEST BROADWAY  
WEST TOWER, SUITE 600  
LONG BEACH, CA 90802  
(562) 436-3828 – PHONE  
(562) 437-6434 – FAX

<http://www.house.gov/richardson>



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

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EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,  
PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

Chairman Price, thank you for convening this witness request day on the FY2011 Homeland Security Appropriations. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of California, which I am privileged to represent, has a vital interest in ensuring our homeland security needs are adequately funded. My district is located in Southern California, which is no stranger to natural disasters ranging from earthquakes to mudslides to wildfires. The 37<sup>th</sup> district is also home to many high-value terrorist targets, such as the Port of Long Beach.

Therefore, I am concerned about the decrease in funding for international cargo screening. The proposal is \$84.45 million, a decrease of \$77.56 million below the FY 2010 enacted amount of \$162 million. This decrease is part of a shift towards remote targeting and examinations of freight instead of a physical presence of personnel at the ports. The 9/11 Act set forth a goal of working towards 100% cargo screening, and this budget decrease indicates a movement away, instead of towards, that goal. While I recognize the fiscal constraints facing the President and the Department, I question the decision to deemphasize cargo screening at the expense of the safety of our ports.

In addition, as chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency, Communications, Preparedness, and Response, I am pleased to see a 2.31% increase in FEMA's budget. However, I notice that there is a cut of \$200 million to the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program and the Assistance to Firefighter Grants (AFG). I believe these cuts will severely limit the

ability of local fire departments to meet community needs and maintain the readiness of local first responders during all types of emergencies. Collectively, these two programs are often the last lifeline for fire departments struggling to sustain their capabilities in this economic downturn.

For example, the federally funded Alameda Corridor rail project, a 20-mile-long rail cargo expressway linking the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the transcontinental rail network near downtown Los Angeles, runs through the City of Compton, resulting in a physical division between the east and the west sides of the City. If the bridge connecting these two sides collapses, the east side is stranded. The current fire station capabilities are simply not enough to protect both the federal infrastructure assets and the size of the surrounding area. Far too often, we ask our firefighters to risk their lives in our defense, and I believe we have an obligation to provide them with the resources they need, including state of the art fire stations.

I also support increased funding for the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System in the FY11 Homeland Security Appropriations bill. The US&R System is an important program for responding to both natural disasters and acts of terrorism. This funding would provide adequate training, equipment, and exercises for emergency responders.

Specifically, I believe the program should be funded at \$50 million, an increase from the \$28 million proposed in the President's budget, and the \$32.5 million provided in FY10. These teams are a valuable resource for responding to the wide variety of threats, both natural and manmade, that face our nation, and we need to make sure they have the resources they need to be fully effective.

I would also like to stress my support for funding of interoperable emergency communications centers grants. The budget calls for an elimination of these grants as stand alone, and I believe lumping these grants into the State Homeland Security Grant Program could dilute the amount of funding for the integration of state and local emergency communication systems.

In my district, the City of Compton is surrounded by five major freeways and located within 10 miles of three major ports of entry (Los Angeles International Airport, and the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles). In addition, the Alameda Corridor rail project runs through Compton's high-threat, high-density urban area. The current

first respondent capabilities in the City are insufficient to protect these infrastructure assets, and failure to upgrade our current operations center could jeopardize the health and safety of millions of residents. This funding is critical.

Finally, disaster relief funding is imperative, and should be funded at \$1,950,000 above the FY10 level of \$1,600,000. The recent earthquake in Mexico with aftershocks felt all the way in southern California is an example of why we need to make sure we have the resources to respond to disasters such as this one. I saw firsthand the devastation in American Samoa after the tsunamis there in September. Many Americans remain unprepared for a serious disaster such as an earthquake, and emergency officials say that cuts in funding have strained their ability to respond. After the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, this is not an area where we can afford to cut corners.

I recently introduced a bill to alleviate some of this burden from school districts, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Preparedness Planning Act. The bill empowers school districts in high-risk areas to bolster emergency preparedness training by establishing a program to award grants to local educational agencies located in areas at risk for terrorist attacks, natural disasters and public health emergencies. This is the kind of funding we need to make sure our communities have so they are not ill-prepared when a disaster strikes.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for receiving my testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.